

April Stories in the Women's Magazines

By DOROTHY SCARBOROUGH.

"I SINCERELY believe that the so-called women's magazines have done more for backward and isolated communities than all the other preachers and teachers together," says Mary S. Watts in a letter to Grant Overton, which he quotes in his *The Women Who Make Our Novels*. No sensible person now doubts the value of the women's magazines in disseminating information and inspiration along many lines of human activity. But there are occasional beings, otherwise well informed, who still believe that the chief—or sole—merit of these publications lies in their admonitions against the giving of sausages and cheese to infants, and their housewifely instructions on how to make a boiled egg look like a water lily and how to crochet a beribboned border round a porous plaster. Many readers are unaware that the women's magazines are publishing a deal of fiction, some of which has excellent literary quality.

A masculine editor insisted not long ago that fiction must be chosen of a type to please men readers. When reminded of the fact that women buy and read more magazines than men do, he said, "Yes, but women will read what interests men and men won't read about what women care for. A woman will read the *Saturday Evening Post*, for example, but a man wouldn't read the *Ladies' Home Companion*." He would be surprised to know in how many homes the men do read these periodicals for their well written articles and their entertaining fiction. The quality of the stories in the women's magazines has distinctly improved in the past few years, perhaps because of the good prices paid by the more prominent publications of the type.

The *Pictorial Review*, which ordinarily has a high standard of fiction, is disappointing in its April number. *Don't You Cry for Me*, by Mary Synon, is well written, but fails to hold the reader's interest. *In Blossom Time*, by Leona Dalrymple, is a tiresome attempt at humor and realism which succeeds only in boring the reader. *Government Goat*, by Susan Glaspell, has interest of characterization and locale but seems, for some indefinable reason, to drag.

The *Woman's Home Companion* contains a delicious bit of adolescent realism in Fannie Kilbourne's *Her First Caller*. *The Coward*, by Edith MacVane, contains dramatic incidents, but does not make one believe that it is what it professes to be, the diary of a French captain.

The *Delineator* likewise has a character story of a French soldier, *The Orchid of the Holy Ghost*, which seems mechanical rather than true to life. *The Planting of the Trees*, by Eleanor Cox, is a somewhat poetic legend of Ireland, and *The Heart of Patricia*, by Ann Whitaker, is a light but pleasant love story.

In the *Designer* Ward Muir has a tender and delicately wrought story of love and spiritual vision called *The Fairest Sight*.

The *Woman's Magazine* has several stories with fairly good plot complication and sustained suspense, of which the best is possibly *Alice Keeps the Franchise*, by Barbara Behan, which, however, reveals the outcome too clearly in its title.

The *Ladies' Home Journal*, whose fiction in the past has run too much to over-sentimentality, has shown a definite improvement in recent months. In the April number Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews has a whimsical and touching story, *More Than Millionaires*, whose central figure is an old colored woman. *H. H. W. and Weebee*, by O. F. Lewis, is a humanly humorous narrative of a fat man and a microscopic dog.

McCall's Magazine has for its best story this month *The Other Room*, by Mary Heaton Vorse, a poetic and dreamy story of girlhood that saw more than the merely visible things of life, which has a delicate touch of the occult. *The Vamp*, by Inez

Haynes Irwin, illustrates the fact that it is easily possible to exhaust the reader's interest in a given set of characters. The early Phoebe and Ernest stories were delightful, but not so this artificial narrative of a situation arbitrarily connected with these familiar characters. *Anna, Who Was Free*, has some interesting character drawing but falls apart in the middle for lack of logical relation of parts.

Harper's Bazar has an unusually good love story, *Georgie-Porgie*, told with an effective satiric touch. *The Delivered Letter*, by Gouverneur Morris, is a war story presenting an interesting psychological problem. *Thrifless Gold*, by Berta Ruck, has a sophisticated cleverness to it but employs the ancient expedient of a bet to explain the plot complication.

Good Housekeeping has an entertaining story of love and spring, *Mr. Peebles's Investment*, by Jeannette Lee. *Thirst*, by Ida A. R. Wylie, is an attempt, none too successful, to psychologize the Russian, as the author did the German in her recent novel *Towards Morning*.

The *Woman's World* has this month a war story, *The Other Man's Coat*, by Alice Garland Steele, that seems credible and affecting. *The Night of the Storm*, by Zona Gale, has a certain reality, though some of the incidents are improbable. *The Magic Girl*, by Katharine Reynolds, begins entertainingly, but employs the trite idea of having the girl in whom the writer takes interest prove to be also an author of fiction, out anonymously hunting copy.

The *People's Home Journal* for April publishes *As Chance Would Have It*, by Charles Trethewey, which contains amusing incidents but whose dialogue is stiff and forced. The whole lacks unity and simplicity. *The Shop of the Little Bride*, by C. N. and A. M. Williamson, is entertainingly incredible, leaving entirely too much to chance.

To-day's Housewife has a good story by Dorothy Culver Mills, *Learning the Judge a Few*, wherein Horace Kennedy, Judge of the Court of Domestic Relations, discovers new facts concerning women and finances.

The *People's Popular Monthly* contains a couple of stories that are readable but not convincing as to plot.

To Bagdad To-morrow

By GEORGE GORDON.

THERE was a time when I envied the prince in the fairy tale, with his seven league boots pacing from hill to hill across illimitable valleys, straddling the rivers as lesser men avoid the water near a curb. Snug before the fire at twilight as Nurse read of magic carpets, of Aladdin and his lamp, of the wish that bore Youth to the bower of Beauty as a leaf is carried on the lap of the wind, I planned what I would do when grown a man—how I would go out to seek my fortune in the great world, conquering time and space, easily, completely as a voice travels along the wire, as a message crosses the seas . . . with the aid and invention of science.

I am older now, ready to adventure abroad—have, indeed, journeyed beyond the furthest hill . . . and am disillusioned. Now when my dreams come true I find them vain and formless as castles built of cloud.

To-morrow, so I hear, we may fly to Bagdad in but a little over three days, come with a roaring of engines and the smoke of exhaust to rest under the wings of a giant (though lifeless) bird of earriage, and to the amazement of Haroun's faithful walk among the streets where in old legendary times he walked and looked with open, credulous eyes upon the wonders of romance—wonders, in truth, though to modernity the miracles in which we dare no longer put our faith. . . .

For us the market place no more throngs about a Merry Andrew at his tricks; there are no beggars in the highways, no fairy in disguise to bless the young Samaritan with purse of never ending gold; no Jinns molest us where we move; no dreaming queen waits for our kiss; the giants are all dead, their castles razed and sown to salt.

We are wiser, it may be; yet when we travel, leaving and arriving at places on a map, we see no more of the country through which we pass than did the prince striding a thousand leagues from sun to sun—an occasional barn, scattered sheep at pasture, a river winding slowly toward the sea, the hurry of some city street. We circle an empire and, bored, carry magazines, newspapers, a novel to while away the time. Yet once upon a time I envied the prince in the fairy tale!

"To help mankind make quicker progress—is that nothing?" you may ask, with Reidar Langberg in Johan Bojer's magnificent novel, *The Great Hunger*.

But having read that thoughtful book I am ready with the proper answer: "Lord! What I'd like to know is where mankind is headed that we're in such an accursed hurry." . . . "It strikes me," says Peer Holm, who hungers for that wisdom, that perfect understanding which is love—"it strikes me that fire and steel are rapidly turning men into beasts; machinery is killing more and more of what we call the godlike in us. . . . One wheel begets ten new ones . . . and the ten again another hundred . . . more speed, more competition—and all for what? For money! . . . My dear fellow, if you only knew how deadly sick I am of miracles of science! What I'm longing for is a country watermill that takes twenty-four hours to grind a sack of corn. . . . I may find a cottar's croft somewhere and settle down . . . and marry a milkmaid."

To Bagdad indeed! We may go rushing through the clouds above the desert to a light where Haroun sleeps—but not in Bagdad. The houses cluster about her seven hills, but Rome . . . the Rome of Caesar and Augustus, of splendor, triumph such as mechanics cannot rear from steel and brass. . . . Rome is no more than a name upon the lips of a callow guide. And with science, with trolley and motor, we will, we have demolished the Bagdad of youth's dream. There is but one road, a royal road, leading to Bagdad . . . to-morrow as yesterday . . . and it is hid from all improvement, all repairing, worn by pilgrims on an eternal quest, between the covers of a book.

"In Orchard Glen"

IN ORCHARD GLEN, by Marian Keith, is a pleasant, mildly interesting novel with idealized characters and a strongly domestic atmosphere. It is clean and innocuous, but with no decided virtues to recommend it. The author fails to show much knowledge of plot structure, for the incidents are loosely related and of a tiresome monotony. The style in general is amateurish. The best point about the book is the character study, for the persons in it are all likable and some show a quaintness that is entertaining.

The war complication, which is forced rather than naturally brought in, spoils the latter part of this book as it has spoiled many novels since 1914.

The chief character, Christina Lindsey, is eleven years old when the reader first meets her in a berry patch, from which glimpse an idea of her situation may be gained.

"She was working so hard that she did not notice a group of berry pickers who had taken up their station opposite her,

and was suddenly attracted by the discovery that they were discussing her own family.

"Them Lindsay lassies are that bonnie I jist like to sit and look at them when I ought to be looking at my Bible."

"It was Miss Flora Grant's soft voice that came through the screen of sumach and elder.

"They've all taken after their mother's folks." It was Miss Elspie's still softer voice. "The MacDonald women of that family was all good lookin'."

"Well, my grief! You don't call that long legged youngest thing good looking, do you?" sang out the loud voice of Mrs. Johnnie Dunn. "She's as homely as a day old colt."

"The long legged youngest thing nearly jumped out of her hiding place on the other side of the bushes. She caught a fleeting glimpse of the last speaker, her long, thin neck and green sun bonnet sticking up out of a tangle of bushes like a stinging nettle in a garden."

IN ORCHARD GLEN. By MARIAN KEITH. George H. Doran Company. \$1.50.

Stella, Star Reporter

By EDWARD N. TEALL.

IF you want a biff-bang story, here it is: *The Strange Case of Cavendish*. The "case" is not opaque. Frederick Cavendish seems to have been murdered just as he was about to go out West to help his miner friend out of trouble. Stella Donovan, star lady reporter of the *Star*, is sent to Colorado to do detective work and excavate a "scoop." Does she get the story? She does!

Stella's author clearly likes her better than he does the other creatures of his invention. He is good to her. He teaches her to shoot a revolver quicker than any army ever did it for a rookie. Stella was all nerve and brains and heart. Jim Westcott, the miner in trouble, ran away with her heart, but she took his, so the account was squared.

There is a beautiful battle with Mexican outlaws, in which Stella acquires herself like a man—like ten men. It ended just in time, for if Miss Donovan had had to bandage many more wounded men, she would have had mighty little clothing left. Stella wired her newspaper 4,000 words from Colorado, and in the last paragraph of the long message she tendered her resignation. She was tired of being a star and wanted to be Mrs. Westcott. We should think all the other fellows would have hated Westcott. Stella was a peach.

THE STRANGE CASE OF CAVENDISH. By RANDALL PARRISH. George H. Doran Company. \$1.50.

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